

9/17/68

Dear Phil,

A time of impatience is hardly the time for the critical reading of poetry, especially if the reader is a man long separated from the singing word. I've been expecting a colleague for some hours. Tried to read a book I really must study and found my mind wandering. Then I read the Ehrlich piece in the current LOOK on Harlech and wondered how all can be so stereotyped and the world progress and the country move forward. That was enough of LOOK. I thought of Martin's poem and got it from the desk.

I read it slowly. I am not sure I've understood it, but I am firm about some impressions. Sincerity. Uncertainty. Preoccupations the full understanding of which require a more intimate knowledge of the man.

The references to and descriptions of love are entirely other than I would conceive or express them, which is not criticism, for love is a very personal thing, as is its expression. It likewise is not adverse to find the exposition entirely unaware of what I would regard as a feminine concept of experience of love in any of its senses. Perhaps coming from a lack of comprehension of what he gropes for or from the belief that there can be no definition of love that is monosexual, I am left with the sensation of an inadequacy.

In a certain sense, is this not what he is saying? If it is, then I think he is saying something rather better than I grasp.

Some of the lines are quite good. I like best

Yet the stalk is never the same for having had the flower.
It's never the same earth - It's never the same ocean, ever,
and even the darkness is different.

In the fifth line of the third paragraph, I mean physical senses. I think some of this is a masculine expression of a male's misunderstanding of the feminine representation of a non-physical love.

I don't know what it is, but I have the feeling that something troubles Martin, that he may not know what it is, that he feels he lacks something or lacks in what he does something he wants to be there.

His choice and use of words is sometimes very effective, like the fragrance "steams" up. I'd never thought of that before. How much he says in these five words: "remote island, and no charts".

There was something in Martin on which I couldn't put my finger when I met him. I feel that in knowing him better for his poems I have no better idea of what this is. I am certain he is a much more sensitive man than I recognized.

At this point last night my expected company came. The man thinks there is a picture of Harber and will, if he has time before he leaves on a trip, send you a memo on Harber's background that may help. Many thanks.

Best regards

Harold Weisberg